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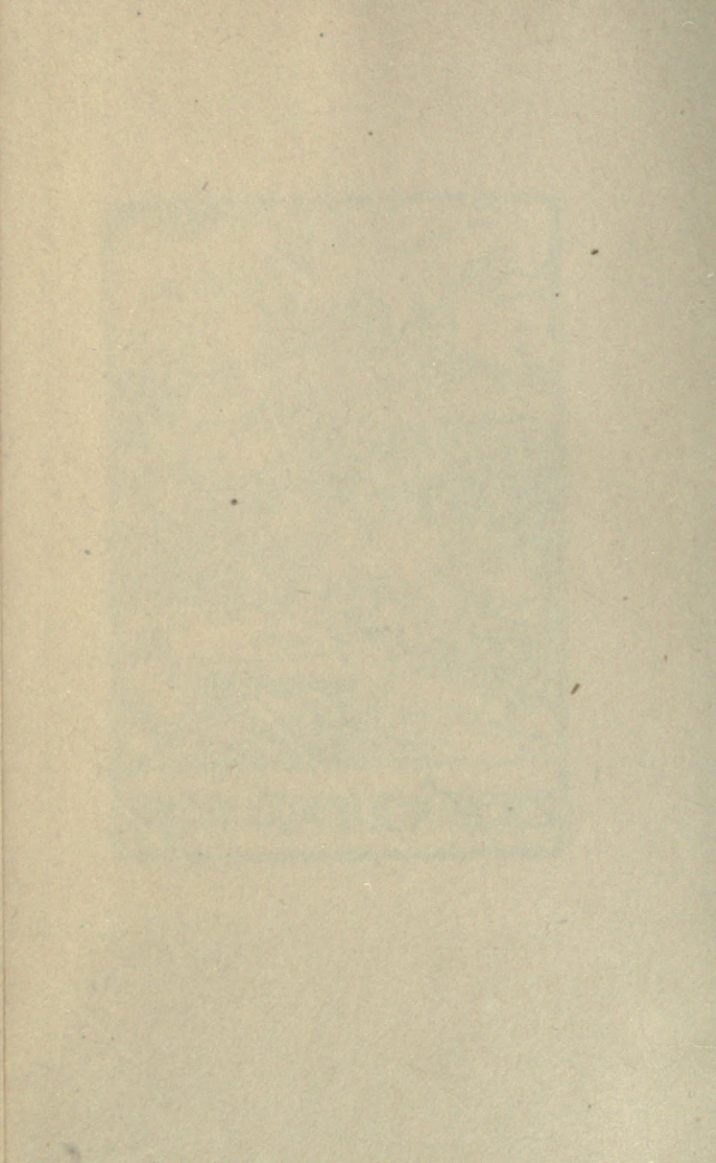
# COLLECTING OLD MINIATURES

J. H. YOXALL



IRENE DWEN ANDREWS







THE COLLECTORS' POCKET SERIES  
EDITED BY SIR JAMES YOXALL, M.P.

COLLECTING OLD  
MINIATURES



# COLLECTING OLD MINIATURES

BY J. H. YOXALL

Author of "The Wander Years," "The A B C  
about Collecting," "More about Collecting"

*Une fragile miniature encadree :*  
Gide, "Isabelle" iv.



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## PREFACE

I WROTE this book with delight, for the sheer pleasure of writing about miniatures ; which is, I suppose, a good way in which to write a book about a hobby. And I wrote it for people who are not too high-and-dry to enjoy a good miniature because it is not the best or most costly of the kind.

If anybody should tax me with assumption, for picturing miniatures from my own collection only, I will stoutly reply that surely it is a good way to show that collecting good old miniatures can still be done ? For all these, and a good few others, have been found by hunting during the last nine years, and they are not unrepresentative of miniatures as a whole. If mentioning the prices given for them offends any wealthy or ultra-fastidious reader, I answer that surely such information as that is just what a would-be collector would like to have ?

The usual plan in works on this subject is to illustrate them from unique or exclusive miniatures, inaccessible to the ordinary view and purse ; I suppose that is why in other books on miniatures such a matter as prices is tabooed. The usual books on miniatures supply the reader with descriptions of heirlooms, or the quarry of millionaires, and with biographies of artists, or other encyclopædic information. Here, however, wishing

## PREFACE

to be helpful, direct, and lucid, I have tried to keep to the point, which is to suggest how, where, for what, and at what cost a beginner may hopefully seek.

I am of course aware that "the good is the enemy of the best," but on the other hand the best may be made the enemy of the good, as indeed it is by high-and-dry collectors and writers about miniatures; to refuse any but the rarest and most costly examples is a game of patience at which only the wealthy can play. But I have seen in the kitchen-sitting-room of a very small house a hundred old miniatures which enthusiasm had collected for small sums, yet with great delight; many of the hundred were quite fine, not one was not worth collecting, and they gave as much joy to the owner as a Park Lane collection can do.

There are fortunate folk who inherit family miniatures, but the happiest possessors are they who collect for themselves. And as I know that this pleasure may still be had by people of moderate means, I have written this book to say so; not merely for publication and pelf, but because my fingers tingled (so to speak) to write about miniatures, those dainty morsels of beauty and joy.

*Kew*, 1915.

J. H. YOXALL.

[N.B. The illustrations in this book do not represent relative sizes to the same scale.

I shall much value the kindness of any reader who recognises and names a sitter sending me the information on a postcard.—J. H. Y.]

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## I. CAN IT STILL BE DONE?

MANY a would-be collector of fine old miniatures is put off by the belief that they all are already hoarded, in galleries like the Wallace or the Victoria and Albert, or in mansions such as Windsor Castle, Montagu House, Chatsworth, Welbeck Abbey, and Ham House. There they are, there they will remain, and that is an end to it, is what most would-be collectors suppose; but to gloat upon a splendid seventeenth-century miniature on silver which cost a guinea, and a Holbeinesque miniature on gold which cost fifty-five shillings, is to know by experience that collecting such delightful old treasures may still be done.

You must have the *flair*, of course—that is, you must hunt on the scent, and know the quarry when you come upon it—but these are knacks and qualities which almost anybody can acquire. Experience does it; that it still can be done, and how, I shall hope to show. I will try to show it systematically yet interestingly, classifying but expounding, giving explicit advice as to the search for the real, and tests and warnings as to the counterfeit; with illustrations taken from my own collection. What they cost me is mentioned also, to show that desirable old miniatures may still be hunted for hopefully, and—one at a time, no doubt, and with

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intervals between the findings—may still be found at reasonable prices.

Now, this is a piece of work which has not hitherto been done. Most books on old miniatures are big, tantalizing, and even forbidding, for they tell us all about inaccessible or unique old miniatures very learnedly, but help us little in collecting miniatures which may still be had ; the most pretentious, which was also, perhaps, the worst, was produced in Germany. I hardly wonder at a friend of mine who, irritated by one of these books, cast it into his study fire. But that was hasty ; such a book as that is valuable for reference, as a kind of dictionary of miniaturists' names and styles, though very incomplete even for that purpose. And there is encouragement in such books, too, even for a collector who wishes to be practical and successful, not mooning over descriptions of the locked-up possessions of others ; for instance, one learns that George Engleheart must have painted some 5000 miniatures, and that only some half dozen of them are shut up in national museums. So where are the rest ?

I am writing for persons of taste and cultivation who can seldom afford to buy an old miniature for more than quite a few pounds ; and I am not writing out of mere book-knowledge or hearsay, but out of experience, bought and gained by myself. By actual practice I have found that with aptness and assiduity in the search quite a number of good old miniatures, some really excellent, can be come upon in quite a few years, at quite a moderate cost. More anxious to be helpful than oracular on the subject, I need not

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suppose the possession of much preliminary knowledge of the subject by readers of this book, and indeed I have discovered that people expert in the matter are quite few. No standard in miniature collecting exists, or can be set up, perhaps, and I am sure I shall be pardoned by many for trying to be lucid and direct in what I here write.

My best examples will illustrate later chapters, and I merely begin with these; but No. 1 is a well-painted miniature which, in a *papier-mâché* and ormolu frame, cost me only 7s. 6d. in 1908.



No. 1

Romance and imagination stir at the thought of who was he, this rather serious, distinguished he with the thoughtful eyes, the strong-willed chin, the powerful nose, and the high brow? The initials and date—A.G., 1798—written near the border are the only trace of any identity left; turning up the records, I find that “A.G.” must have stood for a certain Andrea Grazlia who exhibited portrait miniatures at the Royal Academy between 1776 and 1792; Andrea Grazlia was obviously an efficient miniaturist, yet you will find no mention of

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him in the kind of big book my friend cast into the fire. But who was the sitter? There is something of the Scots gentleman about him, I think. He wears the dress of the *Directoire* period, and upon the collar of his fine blue coat the powder is lying still; he dressed his hair in a queue, he wore a Beau Brummell neck-cloth; perhaps the painting of the folds and shadows



No. 2

of the waistcoat is defective, but as he looks out of the frame he almost speaks. Who was he? Can anybody name him now? No answer; and in that silence lies the pathos of loving and losing, and the inalienable romance of the unknown.

Here, No. 2, is the first ivory miniature I acquired—seen in a shop window in a paved alley off St. Martin's Lane and bought for seven shillings; again "Pasquier," the artist's name, is the only ostensible trace. This Pasquier, the younger, was not a great miniaturist, and some of the work is defective, but he painted the face quite exquisitely—and one test of a good miniature is the treatment of the lips and eyes. These eyes are large and blue, the nose is hooked and long, the lips are set; who was she? She was a personage of great import-



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ance in her day ; I have discovered who she was. The dress hinted at the period, and the head-dress put me on the track. I took the miniature to the National Portrait Gallery and studied Lawrence's great portrait of Caroline of Brunswick there ; Pasquier showed her as she must have been about 1797, when newly married ; before she bloomed into what she was when Lawrence painted her, or blowed into what she looks like in this, No. 3, a miniature in oils which is powerful in portraiture and rich in colour ; it cost



No. 3

me 4s. 6d. at Turnham Green, by the by. This shows her older, and froward in her woe, but the hard eyes are the same ; and here in her head-dress are the Prince of Wales' feathers again ; so that both must have been painted before 1821, when George IV was crowned.

### ROMANCE AND PATHOS AND ART

A collector bends over the trays in his cabinet and marvels how one brief human being could so perpetuate

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he looks of another ; here upon thin planes of ivory, metal, and card, the miracle of life persists, to the life. Romance and pathos, biography and art, life, love, and loss are gathered here in little, upon these small ovals, these flattened eggs. But the collector cannot question them to much avail. The sitters live on, but dumbly ; even the women are mute. Red lips, who kissed ye best ? No answer. Hand on the rapier, how often did you embrue ? Not even a frown. Periwigged peer with a face like Jacob's (the inventor of wigs), what is the shameful truth about that expedition to the Lowlands ? Not even a curse. There come no replies from these " speaking likenesses " ; upon the ambitions, hopes, intrigues, perils, and joys of their lives they are dumb.

These portraits for galleries in Lilliput are rich in tradition, however ; miniatures make their disappearances, as the six or seven of Cromwell that were painted by Samuel Cooper, the Rembrandt of miniaturists, had to do when the Restoration took place. Less famous miniatures than those make their disappearances, also, from period to period ; emerging again in the most unlikely places, and giving the searching collector his chance. And many of them are eloquent with psychology, with the character of the sitter—the only prophecy that comes true. In the Rijks Museum at Amsterdam you may study a miniature by Hoskins which is probably the most life-like portrait of Charles I ; for in the mouth, the lips, the forehead, the colour of the skin, and the pouches under the eyes the observant may read secrets and understand why the tragedy of Charles I

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befell. It was Hoskins, again, who depicted Queen Henrietta Maria as what she must have been—as what the daughter of Henri Quatre and a Medicis mother could hardly help but be.

Faces vary, of course, even the bony framework of faces varies infinitely ; in the shape of the brows, the depth of the eye-sockets, the arch of the nose, and the angle of the lower jaw, no two skulls were ever quite alike. More than forty muscles cover this framework, and each movement of each muscle is expressed externally, revealing emotions, habits, prepossessions and customary modes of feeling or thought. These affect the skin, and therefore the wrinkles themselves are records of past passions, fixed ideas, and character formation ; good miniaturists know and show (as the illustrations in this book display) how seldom it is that even the two eyes in the same head are quite alike. A miniature may thus be made biographical, and a number of miniatures, taken together, such as Holbein's or Cooper's, may be said to depict the human tendencies of the time.

## II. WHERE AND HOW COLLECTING MINIATURES CAN BE DONE

**T**HERE are several hows and many wheres. From time to time collections of old miniatures are dispersed under the hammer, and some of these find their way into quite small dealers' shops. Then comes the collector's opportunity—if, indeed, he has not already taken that by going to the auction room beforehand on "view day," and arranging with some frequenter of that particular room to bid for him vicariously, telling him exactly which to bid for and up to what limit of price. Often, too, small collections of miniatures are sold to dealers by what is called private treaty, and for a few days the purchasing dealer's shop window affords you your chance.

### THE SEVERAL HUNDRED MINIATURES

Not long ago a baronet's collection of several hundred miniatures came under the hammer. They were not heirlooms ; they had been collected during his lifetime, and therefore they could be sold. Here is a miniature, No. 4, which used to belong to the baronet ; I bought it out of a shop in Bloomsbury for £3.

The baronet had been an indefatigable collector. Often he bought at high prices, for he was wealthy, but also he searched and foraged for himself, not merely



## HOW COLLECTING CAN BE DONE

waiting for dealers to approach him with offers ; and in hunting he often came upon good old miniatures which had been separated from their original frames. Every foraging collector does that, and not seldom a frameless miniature affords him one of his best bargains.

Miniature - frames in precious metal set with gems are coveted by wealthy people and bought away from the miniatures sometimes, which then lie frameless, or are fitted with a trumpery new setting, and as the dealer has made his profit on the old frame, he will let the little picture go cheap.



### THE PORTRAIT BOOKS

What the baronet did in these cases was

to enclose the miniature and its more or less trumpery frame within a specially made and inscribed ormolu setting of pseudo-Louis Quinze design, as here shown, No. 4 ; upon this he had the names of the sitter and the artist engraved. In the present example, the inscription is " David Hume, author of *The History of England*, 1711-1776. By Bernard Lens." I am not so sure about who the artist was as the baronet seems to have been, and

No. 4

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the ascription is confused by the fact that there were in successive generations three miniaturists of the name of Bernard Lens. But names are often a difficulty in the matter. As every collector will do, the baronet came upon desirable miniature portraits of persons unnamed, but he dealt with that difficulty systematically, by collecting copper-plate, etched, mezzotint, lithograph, or other paper portraits of some thousands of persons of consequence in their day, who lived during the seventeenth or eighteenth century, and these he had bound up together. I have seen three of these "portrait books" of his. When he bought an anonymous miniature, the material upon which it was painted gave a clue to its date, and so did the costume and the coiffure; he could turn to his portrait books, compare features and dress, and often arrive at the name.

## WHEN A DEALER IS GIVING UP BUSINESS

I am writing now of the genuine chances which a collector finds. In the next chapter I will deal with fraudulent copies of old miniatures, but for the present let us consider the real. Another kind of opportunity for a collector occurs when a curio-dealer is about to give up business and retire upon a competency. Seldom he sends his stock *en bloc* to the auction rooms, for that is a method of sale which does not pay him very well; he prefers to dispose of his possessions gradually, during a year or so previous to actually closing, and he "marks them down," as he calls it, in a very tempting way. If one of the miniatures in stock be frameless, he will let it go for very little, for he considers himself to be

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"realizing" by selling off. The ordinary, general curio-dealer does not understand miniatures so well as he does other classes of the articles he deals in, and this is one reason why picking up good old miniatures cheaply can still be done.

### THE BARROW AND "THE STONES"

But one also hunts elsewhere. I own a good miniature of the Plimer school and period, bought for 12s. 6d. off a barrow in a street market near Soho; I own a contemporary miniature of the young Bonaparte, done upon soft Sèvres porcelain, which I bought for 7s. 6d. in the Caledonian Market; I also purchased a fine small neck miniature, framed in gold, for 24s. there. One never should pass a broker's barrow in a street market without scanning it, for a prize will be found on it soon or late. As for "the Market," whither some 500 little dealers and brokers bring their more portable possessions, laying them out upon "the stones," as they call the paved flooring of the Caledonian Meat Market, every Friday, and on Fridays only, though this has ceased to be a Tom Tiddler's ground of bargains, a picker-up of old miniatures should not fail to go searching there. He should arrive soon after ten o'clock in the morning, not too early for the vans and trolleys to have been emptied of the goods, and not so late as to find that dealers and other collectors who knowingly hunt "the stones" have already purchased the best.

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## THE PAWNSHOPS

A pawnbroker's may still be a place in which you may hunt with much profit, though most pawnbrokers now deal in what is called "the modern antique," mere tawdry stuff—*pacotille*. But in the City, the West End, Bloomsbury, Chelsea, Hampstead, and near every residential quarter of London, as in every small town near, and in every suburb except those which the Great Eastern Railway traverses, pawnbrokers may be found who still carry on the tradition, begun early in the eighteenth century perhaps, of lending cash on objects of art. They advance the money with caution, and can therefore sell the unredeemed pledges at reasonable prices, and often do. It was in a West End pawnshop window that I saw a Holbeinesque miniature which was sold me for 55s. It was in a Marylebone pawnbroker's glass counter-case that I found a miniature of Mme. de Chatelux, by Dupuis, fellow but not duplicate of one in the Jodrell collection on view at the South Kensington Museum at the time; it cost me 17s. 6d. frameless.

## THE SMALLER AUCTION ROOMS

With miniatures, as with every "line" in collecting, chances are found in the smaller auction rooms when a miscellaneous sale is going on; or, the day before it begins, indeed, stepping in and looking round, you may see something desirable and buy it right out, which can be done if the catalogue of the sale has not yet been printed off. But most of the miniatures sold in the



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smaller auction sales are counterfeits, or "the modern antique," or "Mid Victorian"—that is, of dates and kinds which collectors disdain.

### THE SMALL JEWELLER'S SHOP

The small jeweller's shop is a good place to hunt in. I do not mean the little shop that is hung with brand new cheap jewellery and watches, but the "watchmaker and jeweller's" little place, where good craftsmanship goes on, and repairing is the stand-by of the business, buying and selling of old jewellery, as well as of new, being an occasional and subsidiary thing. In one such place, I bought for 15s. a charming French miniature of the *Directoire* period; in another, I found an eye-miniature, though eye-miniatures are excessively rare.

### MINIATURE FRAMES

A working jeweller's shop is also a place in which to come upon old miniature-frames empty. In a small Surrey town I found a large one, fine old paste and old silver, perfect, price £1 5s. It is always wise to acquire a good old frame, ready for some frameless old miniature that may turn up, though one cannot hope always to match frame with picture in exact period or style, of course.

One characteristic eighteenth-century frame is shown in No. 23: at the back, hair fills the whole oval; in front, between the two oval gold rims, is Bristol blue glass, with copper or gold foil under it; sometimes the miniature occupies the other side, and hair the smaller oval; in that case Bristol opal glass is the backing for

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the hair. Other frames, typical of the period, are seen in Nos. 22 and 24.

There is no need for a collector to re-frame his miniatures elaborately, as the baronet did, but often an empty old frame can be neatly adapted to a loose old miniature. One test for a miniature which I have discovered in collecting is this, however,—does the miniature look even better when out of its frame than when in it? If so, the miniature is almost sure to be a particularly fine bit of work. But if the miniature is of the third or fourth order of quality, a good frame, even a brand new one, will wonderfully add to the effect of it. Of course a new gold frame is the most effective usually, but there are dainty new frames in white enamel to be had cheaply, which go well with miniatures of eighteenth-century women—though they would be out of keeping with seventeenth-century miniatures, by the by.

## HANGING ON SCREENS

So that, in one place and way or another, if you are a man, and like to get old miniatures together into a cabinet, it can still be done ; or if you are a woman, and like to wear miniatures as brooches or pendants, or to hang them upon a boudoir screen, it can be done. But I do not advise the hanging of miniatures on screens ; they should be kept from the air, enclosed in cabinets, and if the cabinets have glass tops they should not be exposed to direct sunshine, or be placed near the fire-place. In a rectory drawing-room I once saw two frames, of six miniatures each, hanging over the mantel-piece ; the value of the miniatures would be £1000,

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and every time the fire was lit the value diminished ; heat and damp are enemies of miniatures, the first producing cracks and peeling, the second inducing mould.

But in all these places and ways of collecting there are dangers that lie in wait. Counterfeits which deceive and copies which delude lie ready for the collector, either artfully prepared for him or honestly pressed upon him by vendors who confess themselves to be " no judges." Of these perils I will write next.

### III. COUNTERFEITS AND THEIR DETECTION

**B**EFORE coming to the several classes of old miniatures, and the methods of recognizing and classifying them, it is well to consider how one may detect the fraudulent or other modern copies of the old. No doubt a fine miniature, whatever its date, is recognizable by the skill of its art ; but fine painting may be put into modern miniatures offered you as old ones, and, therefore, the presence of good art cannot be the only test applied to a skilful fraud.

A collector who searches in some of the quarters I have mentioned will come upon many modern daubs, done straightforwardly, but clumsily, and offered to shopkeepers as articles of commerce. These the poverty of the workmanship and the excessive use of Chinese white will betray. The drawing will be poor, and the stippling of the colour will lack any decent degree of finish. There is little excuse for the collector being taken in by one of these, if " Is this good workmanship, fine art, clever painting ? " he asks himself, as he scans the thing with a magnifying lens. But he will also come upon more or less cleverly done counterfeits, out and out frauds intended to delude, and in these the workmanship may be fairly good. I think it is impossible for a beginner not to be taken in by these

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once or twice. His very zest and enthusiasm in collecting will lead him into such mistakes. Yet he will learn from them, of course, and, therefore, a beginner should not be *too* chary of buying, even though he thus acquires a number of unimportant miniatures and a few that are frauds. The more he makes a strong pocket lens his companion and uses it, the less his risk of being taken in. But the point is—what signs and symptoms of fraud to expect in a false miniature, and to look for, as well as what evidences of clumsy workmanship and bad art?



PICTURE OF A  
CLEVER FRAUD

No. 5

No. 5 purports to be a Romney miniature of Lady Hamilton. The painting of it is broad and thin in Romney's style, the tinting of the cheeks, lips, and eyes is clever, the shadows and lights seem skilfully put in, and one would think this a very desirable old miniature indeed. Yet it is a fraud right through. It is done on celluloid, that counterfeits ivory. Upon this false



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surface the outlines and shadows of the face and bust were *printed*, probably by photo-lithography, in the fewest possible strokes and lines of bluish black, so that, with the minimum of labour, a skilful brush could fetch out broad lights and darks in the hair, the shoulders, and the billowy scarf. Then the background was stippled a little, after being washed with bluish white. The artist nowhere fell into the duffer's error of caking Chinese white on crudely; he or she must have been a skilful miniaturist, capable of working rapidly and cheaply, so as to produce a tempting counterfeit for sale at a low price.

The lens detects the photographic basis, however, by the grain of the printing ink, which shows even through the flesh tints. Moreover, Romney is not known to have painted Lady Hamilton in miniature, and if he did not, reflection ought to suggest that this could hardly be a contemporary production, and is probably a copy in small of one of Romney's canvas and life-size heads. And though copying, in miniature, heads or figures out of famous pictures is a legitimate branch of art, it does not produce a genuine, contemporary portrait taken of a sitter, which is what almost every old miniature purports to be.

### COPIED FROM OLD PRINTS

Here, No. 6, is quite a taking large miniature, in a copy of an old frame set with turquoises.

The calash which this pretty woman wears seems to date the work to some extent, but the ivory is new, and in fact the whole miniature is a copy, taken from an

## COUNTERFEITS AND DETECTION

eighteenth-century print of a Duchess of Manchester, a black and white print, not a colour-print. Yet the copier put colour into his work, which is not bad work so far as the face, neck and the pearls go ; but the lack of sincerity, and of consequent artistic finish and devotion to the job, are seen in the crudity of the painting of the calash, and in the hair.

### THE "ENGLE-HEART" FRAUD

Most modern copies of old miniatures imitate the style of Plimer, but Engle-



No. 6

heart's conception of woman's loveliness is also a favourite model for the frauds. No. 7 is an example of the kind of fraud that ought hardly to take even a beginner in. It is painted, not printed at all, and on "real ivory." Crude Chinese white has hardly been used on it, except for the pearls. The critical points—eyes and lips—have been rather nicely painted in, though the eyes lack the characteristic

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"Engleheart" brilliancy. But the stippling is coarse and hasty and the bust is out of drawing. The counterfeiter had never learned to "draw" (in the sense in which artists use that phrase when they mean "to draw the figure and the attitude correctly"), though George



No. 7

Engleheart was of all eighteenth-century miniaturists the one who could best "draw."

Further, the lens reveals that the flesh tints and the shadows have been coarsely painted in. George Engleheart, though he did not finick and stipple so neatly as some of his contemporaries did, left nothing coarse,

rough, and unfinished in his work. He adopted a certain characteristic way of representing powdered hair, which the forger attempted to imitate; but the lens reveals that a cloud of greyish tint having been washed on around the face, the forger put in a few score curving lines and left it at that. Then the counterfeit, bearing the name of "Mrs. Dalrymple Ellis" at the back, was offered for sale as old.

# COUNTERFEITS AND DETECTION

## THE CHINESE WHITE TEST

Chinese white is a thick, metallic pigment, rather resembling the white lead which house painters use. Chinese white was no doubt an element in the palettes of eighteenth-century miniaturists, used for mixing in with transparent tint to make what is called "body colour," colour which is opaque. But they seldom laid on Chinese white in the crude, except when painting lace or pearls upon dark or flesh colours, and they seldom left it standing up thickly, as if encrusted. Now one seldom sees a fraudulent miniature in which Chinese white is not crudely present. Rapid or unskilful copyists find the pigment convenient for rendering the effect of lace, white frills, or pearls, and they lay it on in a solid, caked-up way; which, whenever existent in old miniatures, has in them been softened by time; note the bodice in No. 26.

## THE GOLD BEATERS'-SKIN FRAUD

To keep out damp and dust, which injure miniatures, gold-beaters'-skin, a thin but tough integument, was wrapped about the old ones when they were new, the back edges of the piece of skin being stuck down over and upon the front edges of the piece of ivory. In time this stuff, if exposed to the air meanwhile, may turn a dark brown colour, and, therefore, the presence of dark brown gold-beaters'-skin around a frameless miniature is usually an evidence of age. But this colour may be counterfeited. In No. 8 is shown the look of the back of a miniature covered with gold-beaters'-skin

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as dark and wrinkled as it well can be ; but under it the ivory is still whitish—see the part exposed by the tear—and when one examines the little portrait itself, the

bad drawing, the clumsy limning, and the caked Chinese white, show it to be a weak and valueless affair not forty years old.



No. 8

### THE USE OF A LENS

A strong little pocket lens can protect a collector from delusions which safely confront the naked eye. It is not enough that one should like the look of a miniature when

seen by the naked eye only, or through ordinary glasses. The lens should be brought to bear upon every part of the workmanship of the painting, and particularly upon the eyes, eyebrows, lips, nose, and chin. The lens should search not merely for the absence of crude Chinese white, but for the presence of fluent, easy, masterly art. The art is, I repeat, the chief test of genuineness and value in a miniature. There has

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## COUNTERFEITS AND DETECTION

been no good painter in anything, oil or water-colour, life size or in the small, whose brush moved in a constrained, uncertain, niggling, laborious way.

Many old miniaturists produced their flesh effects by stippling—that is, by an infinitude of the tiniest possible touches, so fine and so many that it almost makes one suppose that they had some unusual quality of minute sight in their eyes. Well, the lens will show if the stippling be of that kind, or if it was crudely and hastily put in, with touches comparatively large. Other old miniaturists chose to paint in the flesh more boldly, with strokes rather than with stipples, but even then the strokes were small. If the old miniaturist used much “modelling”—that is, contrasts of light and shadow, as well as of colour, to show the flesh of the sitter’s face as it really looked, and not as such fashionable flatterers as Cosway represented it—then the bold modelling will show up under the lens as artistic, fine, and masterly, quite different from the few dauby touches and strokes of the copyist or the counterfeiter, who is too imperfect an artist to earn a living as a miniaturist of people alive to-day.

## THE FINELY PAINTED FRAUDS

Yet there are really clever artists at work counterfeiting old miniatures. I think most of them are French. In the Rue de Rivoli at Paris hundreds of miniatures which are really well done, but were done a few years ago only, lie in wait for English buyers, as “antiques.” So do others of the kind and quality in English curio shops, jewellers’ shops, and elsewhere.

## COLLECTING OLD MINIATURES

Often these are handsomely framed in gold, or let into expensively made snuff-boxes or bon-bon or powder boxes of gold or ivory, or ivory and tortoiseshell ; and then a high price is asked for them accordingly. Sometimes these counterfeits are done in enamel, even, and then the price is high indeed. It is only the moneyed amateur who can bite at these baits and be caught, but he often is. I know that sometimes a cheaply painted miniature is let into a cheap old wooden or *papier-mâché* powder box or snuff-box, and then the picking-up collector's pocket and judgment may be in danger ; but, as a rule, the really able and deceptive forgeries are offered for the rich. The best safeguard for them is to demand a guarantee, and, if possible, a pedigree, for *objets d'art* of great value as well as beauty have not very often been left lying around loose and lost to account.

## IV. CLASSES OF MINIATURES

IT has now been shown, I hope, that collecting old miniatures can still be done ; also where it may be done, and with what precautions it should be done. The next consideration is the kinds and classes of miniatures which may be looked for.

### DEFINITION OF A MINIATURE

First of all, what is a miniature ? If you turn to the dictionaries you get such answers as these :

1. A painting, generally a portrait, of small dimensions, executed on ivory, vellum, or paper.

2. Literally, a painting executed in *minium* (vermilion). Any small picture, and especially a small portrait.

3. A minute picture, whether delineating landscape or figures, or a copy of a larger picture.

The promoters of a famous exhibition of miniatures held in London in 1865 endeavoured to define the word, and did so by ruling, in effect, that miniatures are works of fine art drawn to a small scale, on any material, in any medium—*i.e.*, any liquid in which pigments are ground—and in any artistic style ; a miniature may represent a head, a head and bust, a half-length of the sitter, a full length, or a group, but must do so in small ; the promoters of the exhibition therefore decided to

## COLLECTING OLD MINIATURES

accept all such works of fine art as were drawn to a small scale, and were miniature in character. But they ruled out miniatures on porcelain; which is why, I suppose, miniatures on porcelain are little collected yet, though I advise the neglect of that exclusion, and the collecting of miniatures on (not in) porcelain which are fine as portraits, or in art. A dealer's term now heard for toy tea-sets and other very small ceramic objects is "miniatures," and misleading, of course; but it shows how difficult a clear and comprehensive definition of the object called a miniature is. Thus the words "in any medium," if strictly interpreted, would rule out small portraits done by lead pencil, or crayon, and miniatures done in wax or needlework, or engraved on glass, or cut in ivory or wood.

The collector finds no difficulty in practical definition, however. The question he puts to himself is, "Has a good artist been at work on this small or smallish, round, oval, square, or other shaped piece of material?" The main distinction, and perhaps the only true one, is between portrait miniatures and other works of art in small. Portrait miniatures may represent one person only, or more than one person together; and portrait miniatures may be contemporary, *i.e.*, done from the live sitter, or from some other portrait of him or her. But there may also be miniatures which picture imagined persons or embodied qualities, such as Peter Oliver's "St. John" or Samuel Shelley's small figure of "Chastity." Most collectors of miniatures limit their pursuit to contemporary portraits, done from live sitters; others admit any small representation done by

## CLASSES OF MINIATURES

a good miniaturist. Perhaps I may be permitted to recommend a preference for portraits, but also a wide and inclusive collecting, not pedantically confined or defined.

### CLASSIFICATION BY MATERIAL WORKED ON

But if a classification of miniatures be asked for, it can best be made according to the materials worked on—the particular “canvas” of each little picture, so to speak, and this will provide a convenient order for the chapters in this book. So, arranging the chief materials as nearly as may be in order of date of general use, we get the following list :

- |                                   |                                     |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1. Miniatures on <i>vellum</i>    | 4. Miniatures on <i>paper</i>       |
| 2. Miniatures on <i>metal</i>     | 5. Miniatures on <i>ivory</i>       |
| 3. Miniatures on <i>cardboard</i> | 6. Miniatures on <i>porcelain</i> . |

A cabinet which includes a good example or more than one, of each of these six classes of miniatures may be but a small collection, but it is a respectable collection all the same ; it displays knowledge, as well as search and acquisition ; it shows the collector to understand the *science* of what he is doing, and to have studied his hobby. The minor divisions are, on vellum, the *missal* and the *portrait* ; on metal, the *enamelled* and the *painted* ; on paper, the *illuminated* in early printed books and the separate bit of paper *painted* ; on ivory, the *painted on* and the *sculptured in* ; the sculptured in wood ; the engraved or painted on glass ; the stitched or painted in needlework ; and a collection which includes examples of these also may be regarded as complete.



## COLLECTING OLD MINIATURES

In number of miniatures, or in representation of the work of every miniaturist, no collection can be complete, of course, which is one reason why the impression obtained that collecting old miniatures was a hobby of the past, that could no longer be done. In point of fact, however, miniature collecting did not become much of a hobby in England until Queen Victoria took it up.



No. 9

### MINIATURES DONE ON VELLUM

The Latin name for a pigment made from red lead was *minium*; red was the colour used by monkish scribes when penning initial or capital letters. When these large letters began to be adorned by little

pictures, within or around them, the term " *miniatura* " came into use, to describe that particular development in the art. The scribes in *miniatura* worked on vellum, and this went on until the practice of printing books, instead of writing them, began to be general; when, after a brief period during which the capital letters of printed books were also adorned in *miniatura* by the brush, the art of " illumination," as it is now called, died out.

Here, No. 9, is a late example of the vellum miniature.

## CLASSES OF MINIATURES

done about the end of the sixteenth century, probably ; no doubt it was cut from some elaborate missal or "book of hours" long ago. It was intended to portray St. Bruno, I suppose. I bought it for 10s.

*Portrait* miniatures on vellum were done during the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries ; most of Cooper's miniatures are upon that material ; No. 10 is a late seventeenth-century miniature done on vellum and framed in fine old white paste. In its old shagreen case, it cost me £1 3s. in the Vauxhall Bridge Road.



No. 10

### MINIATURES DONE ON METAL

During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries much fine miniature painting was done in oils on copper ; sometimes it was done on silver or gold ; the thing was to get a smooth, firm surface—in some known cases it was done on mutton blade-bone, on alabaster, and on slate. The Clouets and other French artists painted

## COLLECTING OLD MINIATURES

on copper, as well as on paper; here, No. 11, is a small oil on copper miniature, meant to portray Cardinal Richelieu, quite powerful in its characterization and pleasant in colouring, though a little the worse for wear. This is the miniature referred to in my *A B C About Collecting* as having been bought, frameless and forlorn,



No. 11

for 3s. 6d. near St. Martin's Lane. This is one of many old miniatures which have been taken out of their frames for the sake of selling, melting down, or dejewelling the precious old setting. Such a dismantled portrait lies about, becomes forgotten, lies *perdu*, in dust, and at last comes to light in a little dealer's mis-

cellaneous tray, to be snapped up by the first collector who sees and can value it. Such is the *rationale* of a good many "finds."

And here, No. 12, is the Holbeinesque miniature already referred to, in Chapter II, as bought out of a West End pawnbroker's window. It is painted on gold, and, both in that respect and in the art of it, had received scant attention, evidently; not till I had removed old paper glued to the back of it did I see the precious metal shining. But the important and

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## CLASSES OF MINIATURES

valuable thing about it, which made me buy it, was the art in it, of course. A little restoration would bring back the beauty of the fur on the shoulder, but the painting of the ruff and of the hat remains perfect yet. These are accessories, however; the modelling and impasto of the face, its coloration, the drawing of the lips, the character in the eyes and nose, and the touching in of the beard and moustache, display the work of a master hand indeed. I make it out to be a portrait of "Sir Thos. Wiatt, Kt.," of whom Holbein did a portrait sketch on paper, which is at Windsor Castle; it certainly



No. 12

is a miniature of that period. As in other miniatures by Holbein or his school, the light falls full upon the sitter, there is little shadow; and the fitting of the subject within the almost round oval is also typical of the Holbein style. From this small treasure the contemporary frame, no doubt of gold, moulded and cut in the semblance of a wreath of leaves with fillets, has been reft away—by what design or carelessness, and when, and by whom, one wonders? The present frame is wooden, and not more than thirty years old.

## COLLECTING OLD MINIATURES

Only a few of the Holbeinesque miniatures can be certainly ascribed to Holbein, however. He was the head and culmination of a school ; he set the standard, and his admirers emulated his work—among them the best-known names are those of John Bettes, and Sir Antonio More, who painted Queen Mary's face on a small, round,



No. 13

gold plate like this, by the by. "A speaking likeness," painted in broad light, with strong, clear colouring was what they aimed at ; Holbein was the best at this, and that is all that can be said. The known Holbein miniatures are done in water-colour, on cardboard, or on vellum facing cardboard ; usually the background is blue, and the painting

is laid on extremely thinly ; these known examples are inaccessible, of course. But No. 12, though done in oils laid on with much *impasto*, is Holbeinesque enough to be by Holbein, and it is "designed on grand lines"—it could be translated into life-size suitably, and it has the medallion effect. To collectors to-day the point is that here was a fine sixteenth-century miniature, painted on a plate of gold, lying in a window among bargain boxes of cigars and secondhand watches, on sale for £2 15s. in June, 1914



## CLASSES OF MINIATURES

No 13, a miniature in *gouache* on copper, was bought in Southampton Row for £1 10s. By the finished painting of the thick lace cravat it may be thought the work of Lawrence Crosse. Evidently, it is a striking portrait, full of life and skill.

## V. THE TRANSITION TO IVORY

**M**INIATURES by Holbein and his school were painted in oil or water-colour upon vellum, metal, slate, wood, cardboard, paper, and bone, but *not upon ivory*. Ivory as a "canvas" for miniature painters hardly came into use at all prior to the reign of Queen Anne. And this affords the collector a test as to the age and authenticity of a miniature which purports to represent a person who lived during earlier reigns than Queen Anne's.

### 'OLD" AND "CONTEMPORARY"

A distinction arises between "old" and "contemporary," therefore. A miniature portrait of Mary Queen of Scots, Queen Elizabeth, Milton, or Charles I, will not be contemporary if it was painted on ivory, yet it may be "old." For we may consider as "old" any miniatures painted earlier than the year 1850, when photography was ruining the miniaturist's vocation. Nearly fifty years thereafter were to pass, during which photographs were the fashionable, as well as the cheaper, mode of portraiture; and until the Society of Miniaturists began to hold exhibitions in 1896, and encourage good modern miniature painting, the art was practically dead.

An "old" miniature, therefore, is one done before

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## THE TRANSITION TO IVORY

1850, let us say ; an “ old contemporary ” miniature is one done from the life, by the artist from the sitter ; an “ old ” miniature not “ contemporary ” is a copy from a portrait, or is an imaginary portrait of some person earlier in date than the miniaturist was. The fame of Mary Queen of Scots for beauty rests upon an imaginary portrait done by Lawrence Crosse, a miniaturist who died about 1724 ; being set to “ restore ” a miniature of the Queen, he gave her new features, which fulfilled his own ideal of womanly loveliness. These have been copied often, and often on ivory.



No. 14

Such miniatures, if done before 1850, are therefore not contemporary, yet they may be considered “ old.” Here, No. 14, is a miniature, which represents a sitter in Elizabethan costume ; somebody took this copy done on ivory, and let it into an old wooden box. I bought the whole out of a Westminster pawnshop window for 12s. 6d., but I mention this as a warning, not as a prize.

### MINIATURES DONE ON CARD

Few old miniatures have been painted on anything but ivory since Queen Anne was first dead, except

## COLLECTING OLD MINIATURES

those done in enamel on metal. Therefore an old miniature done on card or paper is rarer, and to some extent more desirable to acquire, than an ordinary old one done on ivory. In tracing the transition according to the material of the base, we must note that



No. 15

probably miniatures done on baby calf skin or chick skin (*pecorella*), used alone or backed with card, came next in lineal descent to missal miniatures done upon vellum in a book. But whether faced with *pecorella* or not, a playing card or a piece of one was the toughest bit of cardboard available to sixteenth- and

seventeenth-century miniaturists, for work that was not to be done on metal, slate, or wood.

Here, No. 15, is a miniature done upon a bit of seventeenth-century card. It represents Mme de Sévigné as she was about the year 1657, when she had been five or six years a widow, and, after the first grief for her husband had passed could feel relief and be bright again. Yet there are touches of her mourning costume visible in the black ribbons, and she wears a widow's-peak cap on her coiffure—the black of it relieved with points of gilt ; gilding was often used on

## THE TRANSITION TO IVORY

old contemporary miniatures painted upon card. It has been generally written that Mme de Sévigné's eyes were blue, though she wrote of them herself that they were "bigarrés," which means "mottled," strictly. In this miniature her eyes are seen to be of mingled colour, brown and blue. I bought this miniature for £4. The frame is hardly contemporary, I think, though it is made of the silver and silver-gilt often used for the purpose at the period. At any rate, the name of the famous wit and letter writer must have been engraved at the back in England, for the accents are omitted from the two letters "é" in the surname; though no doubt the portrait itself was contemporaneous with the sitter, and done from one which Petitot did in enamel, or after an engraving by Nanteuil.

### TRANSITION IN SHAPE

Something can be known about the date of an old miniature from its shape sometimes. Holbeinesque miniatures are usually almost round, or round within a square setting; they are seldom rather oval, and never truly oval, I think, and they are small. Miniatures on card were often largish. When painted upon playing cards they were often kept to the oblong shape of the card, more or less. In the Royal collection of miniatures at Windsor Castle there is the "picture of Queen Mary of Scotland upon a blew-grounded square card," which was item twenty-third in the contemporary catalogue made of King Charles I's artistic treasures. But Hilliard, portrait-painter to Queen Elizabeth, often used an oval shape.



# COLLECTING OLD MINIATURES

## TRANSITION IN MEDIUM

A transition in medium also is known to have taken place. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries body colour, *i.e.*, water-colour laid on thickly, or made opaque by adding Chinese white, was used on card, and oils were used on metal or wood, though in a few cases oil colours were used on card or paper. In the seventeenth century body colour was sometimes used on metal. When ivory became the "canvas," transparent water-colours—*i.e.*, laid on thinly, and not rendered opaque by Chinese white—came into vogue.

## COOPER AND COOPERESQUE MINIATURES

Body colour on metal is therefore a part of the transition from vellum to ivory, and here, No. 16, is a fine contemporaneous example; from a roundish ellipse to a true oval is also part of the transition, and this is an example of that. I bought it at night under gas-light—a thing which should rarely be done. I said, "Here is a fine seventeenth-century miniature, yet the frame is *brass*." I thereupon locked it up in a drawer, and did not look at it again for three days. But then under daylight I discovered that the frame and the painting were contemporaneous, that what I thought brass is old parcel-gilt silver, and that the miniature is painted on an oval plate of silver, which forms the back of the frame. I believe it is a portrait of Andrew Marvell, the poet, and I hope it may have been painted by Samuel Cooper, but without the

## THE TRANSITION TO IVORY

least doubt I can say that it belongs to his style and school.

Samuel Cooper, born in 1609, was the very crown and flower of English miniaturists and his work was so powerful and vital that he may be justly called the Rembrandt of all "limners in little." Most of the known work that can definitely be ascribed to his brush is locked up in famous collections, and is therefore without price. But just as there was a Holbeinesque school of miniaturists, so was there a Cooperesque school also; Flatman, Dixon, and Cleyn are its best-known names. Mary Beale, a miniaturist of the period, wrote in her



No. 16

diary on May 5, 1672, that "Mr. Samuel Cooper, the most famous limner in the world for a face," had died that day; in 1668 Pepys recorded that he had paid Cooper £30 for a miniature of Mrs. Pepys, "certainly a most rare piece of work as to the painting"; and in 1758 Horace Walpole wrote that he had been asked £400 for "Cooper's head of O. Cromwell, an unfinished miniature." Cooper's portraits resemble pastels by Quentin de la Tour in this, that the sitters seem not posed but alive.

When Cooper signed his work he joined S and C

## COLLECTING OLD MINIATURES

together in a monogram ; when F. Cleyn signed it was with F and C conjoined. The initials on this miniature are more like F and C than S and C ; but in any case, to pick up this fine piece of Cooperesque work for a guinea is to show that collecting fine old miniatures cheaply can still be done.

## VI. MINIATURES DONE ON PAPER

**A**RTISTS who worked on vellum or cardboard sometimes painted on paper also, and miniatures on paper therefore form a part of the transition from vellum to ivory ; but, as might be expected, paper was also used concurrently with ivory, and has remained in some use till this day.

No. 17 is a seven-teenth-century miniature done in body-colour upon paper ; in the Gray's Inn Road I bought it for 10s. in its frame. It needed and has now received a little restoration, such as any skilful miniaturist practising the art to-day can give.



No. 17

### REPAIRS

It is a mistake to have an unfinished miniature completed, but when damp has brought mould upon the surface of the ivory, or sunlight has caused essential tints to

## COLLECTING OLD MINIATURES

fade, or when the miniature has lain frameless and dust or rubbing has injured the outlines or the pigments, then the services of a discreet and adept restorer may well be called in, unless the miniature is very specially old and important. The cost of that in this case was 3s. 6d., as the injury had been done by rubbing ; the original frame removed, the miniature must have lain without protection, even glassless, until about the year 1800, when it got its present frame. It resembles the portraits of Venetia, Lady Digby ; in the hair near the temples the signs of the retouching may be seen.

### NAMING THE SITTERS

By the style of dressing the hair and the use of jewels as shoulder-knots, the period of this miniature is suggested, but the work was not signed by the artist, and nothing (except a likeness to the famous portrait by Oliver) indicates the sitter's name. I should think that one half the old miniatures extant are nameless ; on the other hand, most of the modern copies and the counterfeits are quite elaborately named. In an old miniature the name was sometimes written on the back, sometimes on a slip of paper kept between the back of the picture and the back of the frame, and sometimes it is engraved or penned upon the back of the frame itself ; in one seventeenth-century miniature which I own the trace is given by the insertion of a coat-of-arms between the miniature and the back of the frame. But a collector must be prepared to leave many miniatures unnamed. The pigment used, the material worked upon, the style, and the quality of the art often



## MINIATURES DONE ON PAPER

enable the period to be determined, and in the case of contemporary portraits the costume helps in this ; but they give little clue to the sitter, unless the costume be distinctive of a monarch or a fighting man, who is therefore the more easily traced. The style, art, and period often indicate the artist also ; the pity is that so many old miniatures were not signed, even by initials or monograms, but one is safer in ascribing a miniature to an artist than in naming the sitter, as a rule. I should much value the kindness of any readers of these chapters who may recognize and name to me, on a postcard, any face here reproduced ; but a collector should not be over-anxious to put a name to every sitter represented in his collection.



No. 18

### OLD COPIES OF COOPER

I wish I could be sure that No. 18 was a contemporary miniature, but I cannot. It is old, no doubt ; it is painted on paper ; it is exceedingly well painted, too ; the " character " of the original portrait (for this is certainly a copy) is finely rendered ; the blue background touched with gold is usual in miniatures painted between the Holbeinesque and the Cooperesque, both inclusive ; and the accessories are powerfully yet carefully painted,

## COLLECTING OLD MINIATURES

notably so in the colour of the armour showing through the outer part of the lawn collar. If this miniature had been got at a King Street auction sale for a hundred guineas I might feel more certain about it, but it did not cost me anything at all like that. The paper is old, and it shows no water-mark, but the test of the paper is always difficult to apply to miniatures, because a counterfeiter can obtain paper from the fly-leaves of an old book. However, here this fine miniature is, and is old if not contemporary. It is probably an old copy of a Cooper portrait of John, Earl of Loudoun (1598-1662), though how it came to be copied at all is a mystery, for the original has seldom been seen; in 1910 Dr. Williamson wrote that for a couple of generations it was lost sight of behind some oak panelling and had only recently come to light; and no picture of it was ever published until 1910, so that no modern copy of it could have been made until then. The frame is quite recent, of course, but then I bought the whole, as it stands, for 1s. 6d. out of the window of a marine stores in the Old Kent Road in the year 1907.

Eighteenpence for this miniature, and yet what force and character in the face and in the limning of it! As might be expected, body-colour has been used, though much of the flesh-tinting is transparent water-colour, in the style which Cooper himself used to lay it on. The hair is wonderfully well done, too—as the hair is in Cooper's work in particular. I cannot feel sure that this miniature is contemporary with the sitter or as old as Queen Anne, yet what modern miniaturist or which of the finickers who worked on ivory under

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## MINIATURES DONE ON PAPER

the Georges could have worked on paper with so much power, spontaneity, freedom, and lifelike effect as this? There was a Mrs. Rosse or Ross who copied several Cooper miniatures contemporaneously; was this her work? This is one of the mysteries which a picker-up of old miniatures comes upon in his street travels, for by what carelessness, neglect, or accident did this fine piece of work come into the hands of a marine-stores keeper, and how long had it waited a purchaser at the exorbitant price of one-and-six?



"PLUMBAGO" MINIA-  
TURES

No. 19

Miniatures done in lead pencil on paper are called "plumbagoes," and some of them date as far back as the reign of Charles II. David Loggan was the master in this style about that date, and Thomas Forster did fine plumbagoes at about the beginning of the eighteenth century. Some plumbagoes are lightly tinted with colour on the flesh and hair. Here, No. 19, is a plumbago, signed "Littlejohns, fecit," done about the year 1795 to judge by the costume; I bought it for 3s., loose from its former frame, but the power of it as a portrait and the delicate work in the features and the dress

## COLLECTING OLD MINIATURES

has not been rubbed away ; the chief defect is a lack of modelling at the ear.

Until recently plumbago miniatures could be bought for next to nothing ; here is No. 20, for instance, which



No. 20

cost me 2s. out of a little dealer's portfolio. The art of it and the details of the costume suggest that it is a portrait sketch by Sir Thomas Lawrence. The charming little walnut-wood frame is contemporary, though I bought it separately for 3s. 6d.

## VII. MINIATURES DONE ON IVORY

AS I approach the subject of miniatures painted in water-colour on ivory, which so many people seem to suppose are the only kind of miniatures worth collecting, I should like to repeat and emphasize the principle that what really counts in a miniature is, or ought to be, the art of it—the artist's taste and skill. A collector gradually learns how to distinguish the true from the counterfeit and the old from the modern, but he ought early to study how to distinguish between the well-painted and the poorly done, because this will help him in distinguishing between the varieties just mentioned. There can be no better way of studying what a really fine, well-painted, old miniature is like than by noticing those which hang on the screens under glass at Hertford House (the Wallace collection) at the National Portrait Gallery, and at the Victoria and Albert Museum (the Jones and the Dyce collections); and while this trains the eye in respect of miniatures particularly, the study of fine pictures on canvas, lovely drawings in water-colour, or noble black-and-white work will also have prepared one to recognize fine art even when done "in small."

Becoming able to judge a miniature by the art in it, a collector is the less willing to value it according to the mere name of the sitter or even the name of the



## COLLECTING OLD MINIATURES

artist ; also he disdains the " real ivory " commendation as much as he does the " real gold frame " which a dealer mentions whenever he can, and sometimes when he ought not. The authors of big books on the subject lay proper stress upon the work done by the most famous miniaturists, but there were not a few good artists " in little " whose names those books do not mention, or hardly mention ; some hundreds of miniaturists on ivory exhibited at the Royal Academy in their day ; and therefore a collector may quite cheaply acquire examples of good work if he buys according to the art he perceives, and not by the artist's mere name.

### DISTINCTIVE STYLES

After a while the collector becomes able to distinguish miniatures according to their periods and " schools," and then according to the styles of certain well-known artists. For instance, Smart's work almost always shows a morbidity and individuality of look in the eyes. Dr. Williamson (much my most helpful authority on miniatures, whose books are exempt from the dissatisfaction rightly felt with others on the subject) refers, " as characteristic features, to the rich, subdued colouring of Edridge, in its tones often recalling an oil portrait, to the broad, full, fleshy faces of George Engleheart, so noticeable even in his slighter and unfinished works ; to the somewhat weak and niggling work of Cotes with its own special, quiet refinement ; and to the free drawing and pale greyish colour of Shelley," and he mentions " the large fulness

## MINIATURES DONE ON IVORY

of the eyes, the wiry character of the hair (see No. 7), the roundness of the flesh, almost exaggerated in some examples," which are distinctive marks of Engleheart's work. As to Cosway's, "nothing is more characteristic than his light, free, easy delineation of hair, suggested in masses rather than drawn in detail (in opposition to the method adopted by Plimer, whose hard, wiry hair is especially distinctive of his work) (see No. 25). The clear brightness of the eyes, and their gleam of pure, white light, the roundness and grain of the limbs, and the airy transparency of the draperies are other distinctive features of Cosway's art." Elsewhere I learn that Cosway liked to see "the letter S everywhere" in the curves of the hair and the outlines of the pose, and that he cast upon all he did "a peculiar elegance and distinction," as indeed one notices in his work.

### THE COSWAY STYLE

But Richard Cosway, as the most famous painter of miniatures on ivory, founded a school and had many contemporary imitators of his style. No. 21 is a miniature which if it is not by Cosway is very Coswayesque. If it had cost £165 at Christie's few would doubt that it was "a Cosway," but it cost me £6 5s. only, near Cambridge Circus in 1912. The skill of the art and the beauty of the work are evident, and the lightness, radiance, flippant grace, and fragility are visible even in this colourless representation of it. It has, in point of fact, the peculiar Cosway colour in the hair; here, as in the finest and most authenticated Cosways, one sees the hair, shadows, and drapery

## COLLECTING OLD MINIATURES

painted in with almost neutral tints, so that "a pearly colour" is predominant, though in and about it all one sees the Cosway faint touches of blue and green; but here also are the "strong darks" of the eyes, the swimming eyes, eyes not exactly alike, and the faint



No. 21

pink of the cheeks, the rich carnation of the lips; while over it all are the refinement, the idealized grace and luscious sweetness of Cosway's work.

I daresay it was not a good portrait; I make it out to represent Lady Skipwith, whom Sir Joshua Reynolds painted in oils and did not show to be anything like so chubby of cheek or unwrinkled. But then Cosway seems seldom

to have aimed at exact portraiture; he would know that he must not, indeed, for he was the fashionable artist—the Sir Thomas Lawrence in small—of his day. His sitters went to him to be flattered, and he must gloze and cajole; his portrait of Caroline of Brunswick was quite false to the life. Indeed, all the Cosway school of miniaturists had to do the same; they must flatter to please, or they could not make a living, and therefore even Engleheart's little pictures of young women were blandishments, and as for Plimer's, the adulation and sycophancy in them is

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## MINIATURES DONE ON IVORY

almost revolting even to-day. This artful misrepresentation of women's looks is characteristic of work done by other miniaturists of the period; Mrs. Cosway tried to emulate her husband; Smart, Richard and Samuel Collins, Wood and Edridge essayed to paint in the flattering Cosway style, more or less.

The miniature here represented has R. C., 1781, in black just above the frill on the right shoulder. At one time this bit of ivory must have lain frameless, for the signature has been rubbed, and so have the sleeve and the bodice. Cosway is not known to have signed his initials on the front of miniatures often; only two or three authenticated instances are known to exist. Richard Collins *did* sign his work R. C. on the front of the miniature, but then, Richard Collins coloured faces ruddily, and is not represented anywhere else by work so dainty and delicate as this. About this there is indeed the "certain hot-house lusciousness" which has been said to be a constant feature of Cosway's work; here, too, is indeed "hair that is a happy combination of the sculptor's and the painter's art,"—as Mr. Dudley Heath has noticed—it possesses "the soft, radiating appreciation of line, with a classic uniformity of mass, crowning the head like a bishop's tiara, or lightly caressing the rounded contours of neck and shoulder." The "skyey" background, too, is in Cosway's own special choice of tints, the cold, clear blue lightening into white, which he used during the better part of his career. In some respects the face might be by Engleheart, but the neck and bust show Cosway's rapid bad drawing, and the head is not

## COLLECTING OLD MINIATURES

posed in quite the middle of the oval, a thing which Cosway seldom did, though his school did it almost always ; so that—yes, I think I must claim that this is a Cosway, perhaps done, signed, and dated to show that Engleheart's best could be bettered.

Even the most dampening of critics would let it pass as a typical example of the eighteenth-century style, however, and a collector can hardly mistake this style when he has once studied it. But he must beware of forgeries ; not merely those done lately, which are innocuous except to rash inexperience, but those fraudulent copies done fifty or sixty years ago, which time also has been at work on. I saw such an one the other day ; in faded ink at the back it bore the legend which is supposed to authenticate a Cosway—"Ricardus Cosway, R.A., Primarius Pictor Serenissimus Walliae, Principis Pinxit," and a date—but the painting belied the signature, though the price asked was £150.

On the other hand, there must be many genuine Cosway miniatures still existent but unrecognized as such. For the artist painted during fifty years, and sometimes "when he sat down to dinner would boast that he had dispatched during the day twelve or fourteen sitters," at three sittings per miniature. Though neglect, fire, and damp have ruined many, there must still be some thousands of Cosways extant.

### A "COSWAY" MAN

No. 22 was bought for £5, from a small watchmaker who at last (after much coaxing and a small preliminary purchase) dived into his safe and produced this ad-



## MINIATURES DONE ON IVORY

mirable miniature. It is certainly a Cosway, done with the lightness, ease, and finished unfinish of Cosway's facile work at its best. The hair and the flesh are significant evidence. The hair has "subtle shades of blue or green in it," as Dr. Williamson has noticed in Cosway's work with a pedigree; it is broad, and life-like, "resembling soft-pencil work"—indeed, it is pencil work lightly tinted in the Cosway manner. Half the forehead and most of the right cheek consist of the ivory untinted, and a lens shows that the pencil-marks still remain near the lips and eyes. "A touch of colour and a few hasty strokes, a little dark stippling in the shadows, and a living face" describes this miniature exactly; with faint blues and greens in the coat, and pink amidst the blue of the background, the "Cosway" colouring is delightful to see. Also the grace, and the aristocracy of the work, so to speak, are evident here; as they are in No. 21.



No. 22

I am not so bold as to claim the discovery of three Cosways and the purchase of them cheaply, but in No. 23 may be seen another variety of the style. £5 was the price of this, at a small jeweller's in Oxford Street. The frame-maker who opened it for me, so

## COLLECTING OLD MINIATURES

that a little dust which had gathered inside might be removed, declared that the frame had never been disturbed since it was fitted. The hair in the back of the frame is still so beautiful and was so lavishly



No. 23

supplied that only a young woman's head could have parted with so much, and from the striking nose, fine eye, and above all the singular lower lip, I judge this to be a portrait of Sarah Kemble, painted soon after she had become Mrs. Siddons, and had appeared at Drury Lane theatre, when nineteen years old.

The untouched contents, the back papers, and the tattered gilt foil under the Bristol blue glass between the two gold rims, bear out the date.

### THE GEORGE ENGLEHEART STYLE

Engleheart's ladies, resembling Cosway's in many things, have something keener and stronger than his in their look, and the drawing is better ; but Engleheart's best miniatures are those of men, and broadly

## MINIATURES DONE ON IVORY

and nobly show the English strength of character. No. 24 is one, an obvious masterpiece, though signed inconspicuously with a script "E," as was the artist's wont; I bought it for £4. The coat, in the buttons and the hatching of the shadows, is characteristically "Engleheart," but consider the character in the face, the modelling at the mouth and chin, and—for a particularly happy detail—the way the wig sits upon the temples and against the cheek. I cannot trace the sitter, but he and the artist together produced a noble piece of work indeed. Engleheart's work was deeper, more serious, and more honest than Cosway's. It was also richer



No. 24

in tint, and the eyes more brilliant. The eyes are often too large. An Engleheart woman's face is weaker than an Engleheart man's, but not so weak as a Cosway woman's, nor yet so daintily fine. Illustration No. 7 crudely imitates the Engleheart woman's style.

### THE ANDREW PLIMER STYLE

The third most famous English miniaturist on ivory was Andrew Plimer, though I cannot understand why his work, so much inferior to Cosway's or Engleheart's

## COLLECTING OLD MINIATURES

as it was, should have got such a vogue; Smart was a finer artist than he. No. 25 is an old copy of one of Plimer's portraits of Lady Northwick; it cost me 12s. 6d. off a barrow in Soho; I give it here to indicate the Plimer style; note the "wiry" hair. Copies of



No. 25

Plimer's showy work, intended to deceive, are as numerous as copies of Cosway's, but this is an old copy, and not slavish nor deceptive, for it does not fully reproduce the characteristic Plimer defect of enlarging and darkening the eyes to a totally unnatural extent; to judge by the eyes, all Plimer's women sitters must have used kohl or henna, or some other cosmetic which gives a

houri-like bigness, darkness, and softness to the eyes. Except in a weakness and a lowness of tints, No. 25 represents fairly well the style which a collector should have in mind when going hunting for Plimers. But they are risky and deceptive to collect.

## THE MINOR ARTISTS

The following names and dates more than cover the great period of English miniature-painting upon ivory; Cosway (1740-1821), J. Smart (1741-1811), George Engleheart (1752-1829), Andrew Plimer (1763-

## MINIATURES DONE ON IVORY

1837), Ross (1794–1860). Cosway began to paint miniatures in 1761, and Sir William Ross ceased to paint them in 1856, so that the “great period” lasted for ninety-five years.

Of other leading miniaturists, contemporary with some of the eminent five just named I mention J. Nixon (1741–1812). Ozias Humphrey (1742–1810). J. Russell (1745–1809), S. Shelley (1750–1808), W. Grimaldi (1751–1830), W. Wood (1768–1808), H. Edridge (1769–1821), A. Robertson (1777–1845), Mrs. Mee (1775–1851). But there were also other good miniaturists of the period, whose names are less known, yet whose work is well worth hunting for; I cannot catalogue and date all these, but have mentioned and shall mention some of them incidentally. And there were yet other miniaturists, whose names even are unknown, but whose work, bearing initials, exists in great collections, and has been thought worthy of inclusion in exhibitions of miniatures from time to time. It is old miniatures unsigned, or anonymously initialled, which afford a beginner at collecting to-day his best chances of success, for signatures or recognizable initials increase a dealer's prices; though, as I think I have shown, assiduity and study can still acquire miniatures “by the best hands” for quite small sums indeed.

No. 26 is a miniature initialled P. J. in script. Paul Jean exhibited miniatures at the Royal Academy from 1787 to 1802—the Royal Academy lists of exhibitors are, by the by, a source of much information on the subject of these chapters—but he probably did not



## COLLECTING OLD MINIATURES

greatly succeed in a worldly sense, for his miniatures seem to be few. Yet he painted well, as this specimen testifies, and so well did he paint, indeed, that one of the miniatures he produced was bought for the Pierpont Morgan collection as "a Cosway," and was only later

discovered to be by Paul Jean by the presence of "P. J." upon the edge of the ivory.



No. 26

Obviously the miniature here represented is rather Coswayesque; the treatment of the bodice frills is very effective, and the tinting is delightful to the eye; I make out that the sitter was perhaps the Miss Crockett whose portrait Hoppner painted in large. The way in which

this miniature came into my possession is worth mentioning, for it shows what experiences a collector may have. Somewhere about the year 1790 this miniature was glued down to the page of a lady's album of copied verse and "sentiments"; it would be little valued at that date, when miniatures were plentiful. Eighteenth-century albums have lasted on, however, and in the Caledonian Market five or six years ago I found a broker removing this miniature from the album page. He removed it with his clasp-knife, and I put out my hand to stop him half a minute

## MINIATURES DONE ON IVORY

too late. The miniature cracked its whole length, into two clean-edged pieces, and he looked at it with surprise. Then he said, "It's broke, sir, but—what d'you say to eighteenpence for it?" I said yes, and by experiment found that a cleanly broken miniature can be neatly repaired; glue was brought into connexion with this again, to fix the two pieces closely side by side upon a rigid backing, and—behold the result!

For the charming miniature of sweet sixteen, No. 27, framed in old ormolu and coloured paste, I gave something less than £3 in 1914. It is initialled R. D. R. Dudman was another



No. 27

of the almost unknown miniaturists; what is known of him is that he exhibited at the Royal Academy once, in the year 1797, and that he painted the father and mother of Richard Cobden about the year 1799. Those Cobden miniatures are poor compared with the one here represented, and I am perhaps justified in supposing that R. Dudman lived to paint better as he grew older, for the dress of the girl here shown is early nineteenth-century, I should think. At any rate, this is a very agreeable and skilful old miniature, excellent in colour and technique.

# COLLECTING OLD MINIATURES

## NECK MINIATURES ON IVORY

Many of the minor artists, and some of the more prominent ones, painted very small miniatures of men, to be worn below fair necks, often surreptitiously and under the bodice. Here are two of the kind. No. 28



No. 28

is quite a masterpiece of fine, strong work, well worth the sovereign I paid for it ; the sitter must have been some soldier lover gone to the Peninsular War. I think he died in battle, for there is the destined look in his face. Romance haloes miniature-collecting when one thinks of all that life and love meant to the women and the men portrayed ; caught in their

youth or their prime, and in their vividness, perpetuated upon a square inch or two of surface, they seem to live on still, in a house of crystal and gold ; but their hopes and ambitions, joys and glad memories, sorrows, errors, and pains are dead. Who was this splendid young officer with the ruddy skin, the commanding eyebrows, the sensuous mouth, the wistful eyes, and the sturdy hair disdaining all powder but gunpowder ? Impossible now to know ; and I can find no initials or trace of the artist even, though I think the style is that of Grimaldi.

No. 29 is in the style of Edridge, and of that date ; I gave 24s. for it in the Caledonian Market, and the

## MINIATURES DONE ON IVORY

little broker said truly that the frame and hanger were "real gold." A little restoration was needed, and the miniaturist I employed used too much Chinese white on the neckcloth, but this is nevertheless a desirable little miniature to own. It has no glass at the back for hair of the beloved's head to be treasured in ; the other neck miniature has. Larger miniatures with hair fantastically woven in with pearls between the back papers of the ivory and the glass back of the whole seem to have been late—Regency and Early Victorian ; often when a sailor was the sitter the background of the picture is sea, and on it a diminutive representation of his ship.



No. 29

## IVORY-BOX MINIATURES

Round ivory boxes, sometimes inlaid with narrow rings of tortoiseshell, and holding a miniature set in a thin gold rim on the lid, are often seen, but most of them are quite modern, and hardly any of them are quite old. By exception a really fine old miniature may have been reset into a box, but, generally speaking, these are objects that may pass muster on boudoir tables but are unworthy of a place in a cabinet of miniatures ; unless, indeed, they are so old and costly as to be out of the ordinary collector's reach.

## VIII. FRENCH MINIATURES ON IVORY

A GOOD many French miniatures on ivory exist in this country, a few done here, by French artists resident here awhile ; the others belong to the Wallace collection, or to private collections, and were bought in France, where they were painted. Occasionally a collector comes upon a French miniature for sale in England, however, and no collection can be considered representative which does not include a good sample or two of the art as it used to be practised in France.

### ENGLISH OR FRENCH ORIGINS?

A collector should not neglect French miniatures, though miniature-painting, like transparent water-colour painting on paper, may be claimed as distinctively an English art. Diderot tried to establish a French origin for the art by construing its name ; he wrote that " The French use of the word *mignature* seems to come from the word *mignard* which means delicate and flattering," but etymology is a deceptive pursuit. M. Henri Roujon, who is the French authority on miniatures nowadays, has allowed that " historians willingly agree that the fashion of producing small, portable portraits began in England," and that " the

62



## FRENCH MINIATURES ON IVORY

English school of miniature-painting, so fruitful in the seventeenth century, led and lit the way for French artists." But he rightly claims that "French artistic genius in the eighteenth century found in miniature-painting one of its most finished expressions"; and this went on in spite of the Revolution, and even of the Terror; it flourished under Napoleon and the restored Bourbons; and it died as the English art did, of the photographer's mechanical practice and commercial attack.

As a rule, French miniatures on ivory were painted wholly or partly in *gouache*, which is body-colour, but some French miniatures on ivory were painted (as English miniatures on ivory were and still are) in transparent colours wholly; Isabey, the best known French miniaturist, used and inspired in others the use of transparent tinting. The four miniatures here shown represent proportionally the three French methods in this respect, for two were done wholly in *gouache*, one was done partly in *gouache*, and the fourth was done wholly in transparent water-colour.

### WHOLLY IN GOUACHE

The actress with the cat, No. 30, looks out from a miniature of much charm and grace, which cost me 3s. 6d. only, though I found it in quite a large dealer's shop off the Edgware Road. It belongs to the traditional *gouache* French school, but it cannot date back further than the year 1830. The print of it here scarcely shows the solid, body-colour effect visible in the actual miniature, though even the flesh is painted "solid"—

## COLLECTING OLD MINIATURES

that is, not in the thin, merely tinted, showing-through English way, or the Isabey way which the fourth example typifies. The use of *gouache* enabled an almost oil-colour degree of treating details by the brush; lines could be painted, instead of stipples, and light-coloured



No. 30

lines upon and amidst dark-coloured surfaces; therefore the painting of the cat's head and body seems to show up almost "each particular hair," and the effect which Chinese white produces when skilfully used upon a *gouache* background is seen in the lace around the arms. But the "solid" background is inferior, in itself as well as in tint, to the aerial, transparent background which

Cosway and other English miniaturists used, and the general difference between this and No. 33 is almost the same difference as between an oil-painting and an *aquarelle*.

Under the brush of a really fine artist, however, the wholly *gouache* method produced very beautiful work indeed. No. 31 was probably painted by C. G. A. Bourgeois, for it shows the silhouette pose, the curled eyelashes, and the large eyes which characterized his style, and the costume suits his date. Painted in *gouache*, upon ivory that had been first powdered over

## FRENCH MINIATURES ON IVORY

until the surface had an almost chicken-skin effect, this miniature and its winning sitter present a peculiar charm. To relate how I found it may help a collector to persist. I saw a brooch-miniature in a small clock and watch shop window, near Westbourne Grove. Going in, I asked, "Have you any other miniatures?" The woman behind the counter said "No." But I had at once seen three hanging on a wall, and fishing into a show case (courteously enough, I hope), I found four others. Of the seven, this,



No. 31

No. 31, was the only one not modern, but it was sold me for 15s., on condition that I also took the brooch miniature at half that price.

### PARTLY IN GOUACHE

I have chosen this small portrait of Wellington, No. 32, for reproduction because it is partly transparent and partly "solid." To judge by the face, hair, and background only, this is English work, but the uniform is painted in body-colour and is a French artist's ineffectual

## COLLECTING OLD MINIATURES

representation of a costume which he did not understand ; the uniform is badly painted—it conveys no military meaning, indicates no specific rank ; the collar, the one epaulette, the sash and the star supply no information, and although painted “solid,” seem particularly unreal. I make out that this is a portrait



No. 32

of Wellington painted by a French miniaturist at some date prior to the Peninsular War ; consider the brown colour of the hair and the still youthful look of the face. By the size and shape of the work I judge that it was once the ornament of a snuff-box ; as it now is,

separate, in its thin gold rim, it cost me £1 1s. in Hanway Street. A good few miniatures of Wellington, painted when he had become world-famous—after the year 1810, that is—are extant, but so far as I know there is only one other miniature which shows him as he was while still under forty years old.

### GOUACHE ENTIRELY ABSENT

Fine French miniatures wholly painted in transparent water-colours on ivory are seldom met with here by a collector, but No. 33 is one. I think it is an early copy

## FRENCH MINIATURES ON IVORY

of a miniature by Isabey, probably done by one of his pupils, Rodolphe Bel, for I make out "R. Bel," as the signature. On the other hand, I am aware that the original of this miniature has recently been copied several times at least; perhaps this is not old; a collector of miniatures will always have two or three about which he is unsure. At any rate, here is a distinguished piece of work, done by a good artist, and the price of it, £2 in a small dealer's shop between Soho and Bloomsbury, cannot be called excessive.

Jean Baptiste Isabey (1767-1853), in some respects the best, as he is the best known, of French miniaturists, had the Plimer habit of over-accentuating his sitters' eyes. Moreover, he invented what is called the *portrait sous voile*—with gauzy wrappings about the face and shoulders, that is. Here are the very large eyes, and here is the *voile*. The sitter was Catherine Denn, Countess Beauchamp; one knows that because there is an original *portrait sous voile* of her by Isabey, on a slightly larger oval than this; I think, but am not sure, that the original was done on paper, as many of Isabey's larger miniatures were, but even this copy shows what a dainty effect the *voile* lends to the face and hair.



No. 33



# COLLECTING OLD MINIATURES

## WHERE TO STUDY FRENCH MINIATURES

The costliest French miniatures are those done in enamel by Petitot ; these are best studied at the Victoria and Albert Museum (Jones collection). Other kinds of French miniatures are better studied at Hertford House than elsewhere ; even the small rooms of the Premier Etage, at the Louvre, do not contain the equal of the Wallace collection, though the Louvre offers a more representative exhibit of French miniatures than any public collection here does of English miniatures, more's the pity and also the shame. As might be expected, the French artists shone most in the ornamental, graceful, or merely pretty, while English miniaturists did best in portraiture. English snuff-boxes and bonbon boxes ornamented by miniatures are comparatively few (I mean old ones, for the modern imitations are many), but French art produced thousands of such sumptuous objects. Some of these may still be purchased, but only for much money, and according to my experience it is hardly worth while to go hunting in France for French miniatures, or for English miniatures either.

It helps one to distinguish between old French and old English miniatures of women to remember that the influence of Gainsborough and of Reynolds is visible in English miniatures of English women, painted by Cosway, Engleheart and the school, while no such influence is visible in French miniaturists' work ; whether in large or small, English portrait-painters of women have been supreme.

## IX. MINIATURES DONE IN ENAMEL

ENAMEL miniatures are a variety of the miniatures done upon metal, but are a special and very important class. No collection is representative unless it includes some examples, but to come upon them cheaply is a happy chance. A fine Petitot miniature in enamel may sell for hundreds of pounds, and for a very small, defective enamel miniature done by Bone as much as £6 is asked. Many enamel miniatures are defective, alas, because the surface chips and flies in places, as you may note in most Battersea enamels, and there are other dangers also, for in a Zincke enamel miniature, offered me at £100 in its diamond-set frame and at £25 frameless, my pocket lens revealed furrows caused by chemical decomposition, which will increase with lapse of time, and cannot be checked. On the other hand, a fine enamel miniature, beautifully painted and treated chemically with complete skill, presents a richness of colour and a brilliant smoothness of surface which in those respects surpass anything ever done in water-colours on ivory or in oils upon metal, and unless it is handled carelessly, it may last in its perfection for ever and a day.

The miniature-painter in enamel took some easily fusible glass to which the desired colour had been imparted by a mixture of metallic oxides. This being

## COLLECTING OLD MINIATURES

fused, washed, and then ground to powder, became his pigment; and his palette, so to speak, consisted of several such glassy pigments, each a minute powder. Jean Petitot (1607-1691) was the real originator of the portrait-miniature school in enamels, and his method,



No. 34A

followed by his successors, was to take a plate of gold, silver, or copper, cover it with an opaque-white enamel, dip a camel's-hair brush into the powdered colours, and paint the likeness upon the white; then firing took place—that is to say, the painted work and

the plate which was its basis were placed in a small kiln and exposed to heat, which fused the various colours and made them one with the white enamel background and the basis. But as firing enamels is a difficult process, and the colours after firing are not at all what they were before it, failure often resulted. Yet when success was obtained it rewarded the artist for many failures, as you may see in the Jones collection at South Kensington, where Petitot's best work is kept.

# MINIATURES DONE IN ENAMEL

## ENAMEL MINIATURES DONE IN ENGLAND

Petitot's best work was done in England; so was that of Zincke (1684-1767). Our best native miniaturists in enamel were N. Hone (1718-1784) and Bone (1753-1834); Engleheart did a few enamels, by the by.

To the period and style of Zincke and Hone belongs No. 34A, which I bought at Exeter for £5 in its original shagreen case; it is probably a portrait of Hogarth by Zincke. Bone usually worked on metal large in size, and often rectangular in shape.



No. 34B

Battersea enamels, our most indigenous product of the kind, were not portraits as a rule, and those which were intended to be portraits were not painted from a sitter, but produced by transfer printing from an engraving, and then slightly tinted sometimes. The cases at the Victoria and Albert Museum show oval plaques of Frederick the Great, George II, his son Prince Frederick, George III, the Duke of Cumberland, Walpole, Gibbon, and "the beautiful Gunnings." But enamel making was continued in London after the Battersea works were closed; black and white enamel portraits were also executed at Liverpool; and at Bilston during the latter half of the

## COLLECTING OLD MINIATURES

eighteenth century some painted (not printed) enamels were done. No. 34B is probably one of them, a snuff box lid which represents Washington, in blue and flesh-colour and grey. I expect the enterprising firm at Bilston intended it for the American market in the

United States which had so recently come into being ; but I got it for 23s. 6d. at a pawnshop in the Hampstead Road. Smaller Bilston enamels than this are extensively counterfeited to-day, and I am not *sure* that this is contemporary.



No. 35

### GERMAN ENAMEL MINIATURES

The country in which an enamel was produced can almost be told from the prevailing tint of it ; thus

native English enamels tend to be black and white, pale pink, and a deep, rather crude blue, while French enamels show brilliant light blues and rose colour, and German enamels are characteristically brown and dull yellow in tinting. This portrait of Frederick the Great when rather young, No. 35, might be known as German by its colouring, therefore, but also it is signed by a German miniaturist in enamel, Frederick Weitz, who flourished in Prussia at the period. I dare say it was one of King Frederick's gifts to some lady, some diplomat, or some officer, and the fact that the frame is



## MINIATURES DONE IN ENAMEL

copper does not weaken that supposition, though it is the original frame, for Frederick the Great was parsimonious. Good miniatures in enamel were done by German artists, and this is one of them. I was surprised to be able to buy it at Coventry for 12s. 6d., but the dealer judged its value by the frame. The brown tints of the German enamelling school are evident; the colour of the back is also a dingy brown.

### FRENCH ENAMEL MINIATURES

It is a relief to the colour sense to look at No. 36, which cost me 18s. I do not possess a *Petitot*, glorious in tinting and exquisite in finish, but the blues and pinks in this domestic interior after the manner of *Greuze* and *Watteau* are delightful to the eye. It is signed "Boze"; *Joseph Boze* (1746–1831) was a skilful miniaturist much employed by the French aristocracy. Though the frame is more modern than the enamel, it is not altogether out of keeping, for it is in the late Empire style, which *Boze* lived to see come into vogue. I give this example here because it represents a class of miniature—the picture—which, as I have already pointed out, legitimately belongs to miniature collecting; no doubt contemporary portraits



No. 36

## COLLECTING OLD MINIATURES

are the most desirable, and next to them come old copies of portraits, but a landscape or an interior in little is worth acquiring if finely done.



No. 37

### SWISS ENAMEL MINIATURES

And here, No. 37, is a picture miniature of another kind yet—the idealized or imagined single figure. Swiss enamels are akin to the French enamels in richness of colour, and very fine work of the kind used to be

done at Geneva, as, indeed, it still is. Nothing more dainty, more evidencing a colour sense, or more proving skill in the painting and firing than this picture of *La Fileuse*, can be imagined, but it cannot be sixty years old. It cost me 6s. at the Caledonian Market, mounted with a silver rim ; the back is slate-coloured.

## X. MINIATURES DONE ON PORCELAIN

**M**INIATURES done on porcelain are seldom collected. Why? The author of the first English big book on miniatures did not collect miniatures done on porcelain, and his influence excluded them from the Exhibition of Portrait Miniatures organized by the Burlington Fine Arts Club in 1889; I suppose that is why. They were also excluded from the Exhibition of Miniatures held in the year 1865.

Yet the surface of a miniature painted in enamel much resembles the surface of one done on porcelain, and porcelain is painted on with "enamel colours," though these are not always oxides of glass. Henry Bone, R.A., perhaps our best English miniaturist in enamel, began by painting china at Bristol, and the hypercritics have always remembered that against him. Thus one author of a book on miniatures finds in Henry Bone's enamels "a suggestion of painting on porcelain, and of the smoothness and want of vitality which characterize that kind of work," and another finds in Bone's enamels "something of the curiously feeble effect of painted china."

These criticisms may pass muster with people who have never collected old china, and know nothing of the beauty of "Chelsea" or "Sèvres" or the power

## COLLECTING OLD MINIATURES

and vitality of the decoration upon "Oriental," but they beg the question ; mere material is nothing in itself, what counts is the art in the work. Painting in enamels and enamel-painting on porcelain both have to be "fired," and the colours which appear on the surface before the work goes into the kiln are not the same as those which appear when the work comes out of the kiln ; the only true differences are the bases and the art. A plaque of porcelain is no worse a base than a piece of copper, and if miniatures in enamel on metal are admissible to a collection, so should miniatures on porcelain be, if the art in them is good. It all depends on the artist ; William Billingsley, for instance, painted roses on porcelain better than roses were ever painted on ivory, paper, cardboard, or metal by anybody else.

This prejudice against miniatures on porcelain enables you to buy them cheaply when found, but on the other hand, because the porcelain base has been taboo, there are few fine miniatures on porcelain to collect. We may rule out, of course, the thousands of "fancy" heads and little full-lengths manufactured somewhat less than a century ago, to be set in gold or pinchbeck for middle-class women to wear as brooches ; a collector sees many hundreds of these in a year. But what he seeks for, and finds once in a year at most, is a fine portrait miniature on porcelain, well painted, which is consequently a work of art.

### THE YOUNG NAPOLEON

Here is one, No. 38, after the portrait by Gros ; it represents Napoleon Buonaparte as he was about

## MINIATURES ON PORCELAIN

the year 1798, when he looked, as a contemporary writer recorded, "like a young eagle moulting." Here, surely, is strong portraiture, with none of the finicking stipple-work dear to collectors of miniatures on ivory only; the complexion of "pallid olive," is well-rendered and so are the striking features and the expression.

The colour is refined, too, the oak-leaves and acorns of the gold braid showing up not too yellow against the tunic, which is not too blue. Isabey and Aubrey painted several fine miniatures of Napoleon, but none give such an impression of force and keenness as this. A



No. 38

collector of miniatures who would disdain to acquire this, in its old "Empire" frame, at the price of 7s. 6d., would be a collector whose respect for rules and custom was more considerable than his taste in art; but if he were a china-collector too, he would find proof that this miniature was contemporary, in the fact that the porcelain is "soft" Sèvres, and as "soft Sèvres" ceased to be made soon after the year 1798 the work is of contemporary date.



# COLLECTING OLD MINIATURES

## THE YOUNG VICTORIA

"Soft," too, is the porcelain upon which this miniature of Queen Victoria, No. 39, was painted, probably about the year 1837, and only a miniature



No. 39

collector who is a china-collector too could say where in England "soft" porcelain was being made at the time of the young Queen's accession. There is no mark upon this bit of china, so that I think it must have been potted at Madeley. Coalport was producing "soft" china in 1837, but as an imitation of Sèvres soft porcelain and

bearing a Frenchy mark. At Madeley a potter named Randall produced soft porcelain so late as 1840, admirable both in material and decoration, but he, honest Quaker that he was, refused to copy the French mark when dealers asked him to do so. As to the portrait, I think it must have been painted in London, by a skilled hand at miniature-work, for it certainly shows no "smoothness and want of vitality." Some former seller's price for it is pencilled on the back—42s.—but I bought it in Richmond for less than a fifth of that sum; had the base been metal, 42s. would

## MINIATURES ON PORCELAIN

have been a fifth of the sum demanded. There is no signature upon the painting, any more than there is upon the portrait of the young Napoleon ; signatures need not be looked for upon porcelain miniatures, and therefore a collector is free to estimate them entirely according to their art. In the present case the tinting and modelling of the neck and shoulder are wonderful, and the eyes, like the lips and the hair, are capitally done.

### THE YOUNG EMPRESS

Here is the Empress Eugénie, No. 40, as she looked in the flush of her beauty and royalty. The portrait and the "drawing" speak for themselves, even in black-and-white reproduction ; you can see the beauty of the eyes, lips, expression, and pose, but nothing except the original can show the rich yet refined colour of the robe and the cushion, rose and mauve showing through the lace and chiffon, or the bright auburn of the hair. A fine artist—probably Goudon—did this portrait, yet left no trace of his name upon it, and therefore, as also because it is porcelain and not on metal, I was able to buy it for 12s. 6d., in its charming old frame from which most of the gilding is gone. I daresay an artful dealer would fit another frame to it, hide the porcelain



No. 40

## COLLECTING OLD MINIATURES

at the back, and sell this as a "fine enamel miniature of the Empress Eugénie" for a considerable price, the "feebleness and smoothness" alleged to appear in porcelain miniatures notwithstanding. So I think I have shown that a collection of miniatures, far from excluding fine work done on china, should specifically include it, if the collection is to be considered representative.

The true collector is one who goes by study, taste, and individuality, not by convention and rule. Too much individuality and discarding of orthodoxy is unwise in collecting, as it is in most things; but too much conventionality is worse. The conventionality of authorities on miniatures has prevented a clean, cleansable, lasting, and inexpensive base and process from being used for portrait miniatures, to any large extent.

## XI. MISCELLANEA AND SIGNATURES

**I**T remains to say something concerning minor forms of miniatures, and to give a list of initial signatures.

### EYE MINIATURES

When Cosway painted a miniature of one of the eyes of Mrs. Fitzherbert, to be worn in a bracelet by the Prince Regent, and one of the Prince Regent's eye, to be worn in a ring by Mrs. Fitzherbert, he set a fashion, which spread to France. A miniature of a woman's eye set in a brooch, such as No. 41, need not mean that it was painted for a woman's wear, for in those days men used to fasten their cravats with brooches. It is remarkable how much of the character of the sitter can be read from a picture of the eye. Eye miniatures are exceedingly rare. No. 41, set in a beautifully worked serpent of gold (symbolizing eternity), is probably French work; it cost me 17s. at a jeweller's near Notting Hill.



No. 41

# COLLECTING OLD MINIATURES

## RING MINIATURES

Very small portraits, of women's heads, to wear in rings were painted. The illustration No. 42 shows a ring containing an eye-miniature. Inscribed at the back of the collet are the words, "General Arabin's right eye, 1798." In this, as in some other eye miniatures, clouds appear under the eye.



No. 42

## BROOCH AND PIN MINIATURES

Brooch miniatures are numerous, but seldom fine. Here is an example, No. 43, set in silver-gilt, which cost me 10s. in a jeweller's shop, Charing Cross Road ;

at the back I find engraved "Motee Mebal, Queen of Lucknow." Small old brooch miniatures of nineteenth century date and style are not worth acquiring.

But No. 44 is an old copy of a French miniature, of the *Directoire* period,

as is shown by the frame of silver-gilt studded with steel, as well as by the costume ; at a jeweller's it cost



No. 43



## MISCELLANEA AND SIGNATURES

18s. Small heads of ladies, dogs, horses, and foxes are found in enamel or on ivory in tie-pins.

### PICTURE MINIATURES

Overleaf, No. 45, is an example of the "picture miniature on ivory; cost 5s. Of course this cannot compare with the larger elaborate French miniatures in *gouache*, representing dozens of people in a room, or whole landscapes; or done in enamels for golden snuff-box tops.



No. 44

### SILHOUETTES

In size and purpose silhouettes are portrait miniatures, but they are such a separate and so large a branch of the whole subject that collectors of miniatures may well rule them out. Silhouettes, as a variety of the miniatures done on paper, were the work of the scissors, though sometimes touched with gilt or colour by the brush; silhouettes *painted* in black upon glass belong to the "glass" miniatures variety, and are more properly a part of the subject than the others can be.

### MINIATURES DONE IN WAX

In one sense, these are rare; because most objects of this kind are too large to be considered miniatures,

## COLLECTING OLD MINIATURES

and should be called reliefs or medallions. The finest are to be seen at Hertford House. Mrs. Patience Wright did many wax miniatures in New England, came to London in 1773, and did many here. A head and bust of Washington, fastened upon a plate of



No. 45

blackened glass, was perhaps her masterpiece. The best English miniaturist in wax was called Perry. He worked from the latter part of the eighteenth to the first quarter of the nineteenth centuries. The little head of Gainsborough, No. 46, cost me 7s. 6d., and is merely given as

an illustration of this part of the subject. Collectors should beware ; many modern imitations lie in wait.

## MINIATURES CUT IN IVORY OR WOOD

Most of the small oval ivories with heads in relief which a collector sees in curio-shops are quite modern and should be avoided, but occasionally a rather old representation of a king or other famous person in ivory may be found ; and this also applies to miniatures carved in wood. The example represented, No. 47, a portrait

## MISCELLANEA AND SIGNATURES

of Addison, is Italian work, to judge by the spelling of the name ; it cost 6s.

### MINIATURES DONE IN NEEDLEWORK

These are excessively rare ; one, of Charles I, may be seen at the Victoria and Albert Museum ; another, of the same subject, at Hertford House ; and a third is known to be in existence : one done in pearls and gems is to be seen at the London Museum. Sometimes a piece of stump-work (embossed needlework) includes a face that was meant to be a portrait, either stitched or painted on the silk.



No. 46

### MINIATURES DONE IN GLASS

Heads, busts, or full lengths of the Young Pretender, his father, or William of Orange are found on wine-glasses, but these hardly come within a miniature collector's scope. There are box-tops containing opaque glass heads of well-known contemporary people. The portraits done by Tassie, too, in a compost of glass and opal colour, are numerous, and may perhaps be considered as miniatures done in glass.

# COLLECTING OLD MINIATURES

## CONCERNING SIGNATURES

When examining a miniature a collector looks for a signature, but as I have already explained, need not be disconcerted by not finding one ; the *art* is the thing



No. 47

that really matters, and fine miniatures, like pictures by great artists who worked on a larger scale, are "signed all over." Nevertheless, these chapters would not completely deal with their subject if they did not include information as to where to look for

signatures, and as to what certain initials and monograms represent, when found.

In most cases a lengthy signature such as "R. Cosway" or "G. Engleheart," if it exists at all, will be found at the back of the miniature, between the ivory and the frame, or the wrappings and the frame. Sometimes a partial signature, such as "Isabey," is found on the front of the ivory, but as a rule one only looks to find initials or monograms there. Most minor miniatures are not even initialled ; but the masters, and the lesser artists too, liked to sign their *best* work, in one way or another. Oftenest the initials or the monogram may be found intermixed, so to speak,

## MISCELLANEA AND SIGNATURES

with the relative obscurity of the background ; often they are all but concealed in a fold of the dress, or in a flow of the hair or wig ; usually they are done very small; sometimes they are placed so near to the edge of the oval as to be hidden by the frame or setting ; in a few cases (where the ivory is thick) they are placed on the *edge* of it, at right angles to the flat surface. It needs a strong lens, a strong light, and a prolonged and steady searching of every part of the miniature, to detect a signature, as a rule ; if gilt or lead pencil has been used for the signature it will be invisible except in a certain fall of the light. In the Engleheart miniature illustrated in a former chapter, No. 24, the " E " is placed just within the angle made by the left cheek and the coat collar ; in No. 27 the initials hide under the bodice frill.

Where a full signature appears, the collector will have no difficulty in obtaining information as to the artist, from one of the " big books " or by inquiry at the Victoria and Albert Museum ; what is added here is some account of what certain initials and monograms stand for.

### INITIALS AND THEIR SIGNIFICATION

The following names of artists refer to initials and monograms actually found upon miniatures which exist in public and private collections. I have arranged them alphabetically (in the order of the initials, not of the surnames), as this seems the most convenient method ; the prefixed star indicates an artist of the pre-ivory period :

A. B. L., Andrew Benjamin Lens ; \*A. C., Alexander



## COLLECTING OLD MINIATURES

Cooper ; A. G., Andrew Grazlia or Graglia ; A. P., plain or in monogram, Andrew Plimer—very small ; A. R., in monogram, Andrew Robertson ; \*B. G. Balthazar Gerbier ; \*B. L., in monogram, Bernard Lens ; C. B., Charles Beale ; C. F., Charles Fox ; C. F. Z., plain or in monogram, C. F. Zincke ; C. R., Christian Richter ; \*D. D. G., David de Grange or des Granges ; \*D. L., David Logan ; D. P., David Paton ; E., George Engleheart ; \*F. Thomas Flatman ; \*F. C., in monogram, Francis Cleyn ; G. C., in monogram, George Chinnery ; G. E., George Engleheart ; G. S., Gervase Spencer ; \*H., John Hoskins (senior and junior) ; H. B., H. Bone ; H. E., in monogram, Henry Edridge ; H. H., Horace Hone ; I. B., John Bogle ; \*I. H., in monogram, John Hoskins, senior ; I. H. fc., John Hoskins, junior ; I. J., in monogram, J. B. Isabey ; \*I. O., Isaac Oliver ; I. T. B., John Thomas Barber ; J. B., John Bogle ; J. B. I., in monogram, J. B. Isabey ; J. P., Jean Parent ; J. S., John Smart ; J. S., with " junr." added, John Smart, junior ; J. T. B., John Thomas Barber or Beaumont ; L. C., in monogram, Lawrence Crosse ; L. S., Luke Sullivan ; M. B., Mrs. Bradney, Mary Beale ; M. L., Lady Lucan ; N., James Nixom ; \*N. D., in monogram, Nathaniel Dixon ; N. H., Nathaniel Hone ; \*N. H., Nicholas Hilliard ; N. P., Nathaniel Plimer ; O. H., in monogram, Ozias Humphrey ; \*P. C., in monogram, Penelope Cleyn ; P. J., Paul Jean ; \*P. L., Peter Lens ; \*P. O., in monogram, Peter Oliver ; R. B., Rodolphe Bel ; R. C., Richard Collins ; R. C., Richard Crosse ; (R. C., Richard Cosway, rarely) ; R. D., Richard

## MISCELLANEA AND SIGNATURES

Dudman ; S., very small, James Scouler ; S., Pierre Signac ; S. A., Sarah Addington ; S. C., usually Samuel Collins ; (\*S. C., rarely Samuel Cooper) ; \*S. C., in monogram, Samuel Cooper, usually in gilt ; S. P., Samuel Polack ; S. S., Samuel Shelley ; \*T. B., Thomas Betts ; \*T. F., plain or in monogram, Thomas Flatman ; W. B., William Blake ; W. E., William Essex.

The following initials are found upon miniatures in public or private collections, but no names can be assigned to the artists whom they presumably represent : A., A. F., C. H., C. S. C. (in monogram), C. T., G. E., G. H. F., G. M. F., H. S., I. C., L., L. H., M., N. K., P. G., W. C.

Anonymous these are, and anonymous many good old miniatures must always remain ; but I will be grateful to the unknown artists, as well as to the known, whose work gives many an hour of delight for the eye in gazing, and the mind in trying to appreciate. Biography, history, physiognomy, colour, and drawing occupy and enlarge the mind meanwhile, and also there are romance, imagination, and the cult of the household gods. What art is so daintily homely as the miniaturist's ? Or what " so valuable in diffusing friendship, in reviving tenderness, in awakening the affections of the absent and continuing the presence of the dead " ? With gratitude, therefore, as well as zest I have written this book, now brought to a close.



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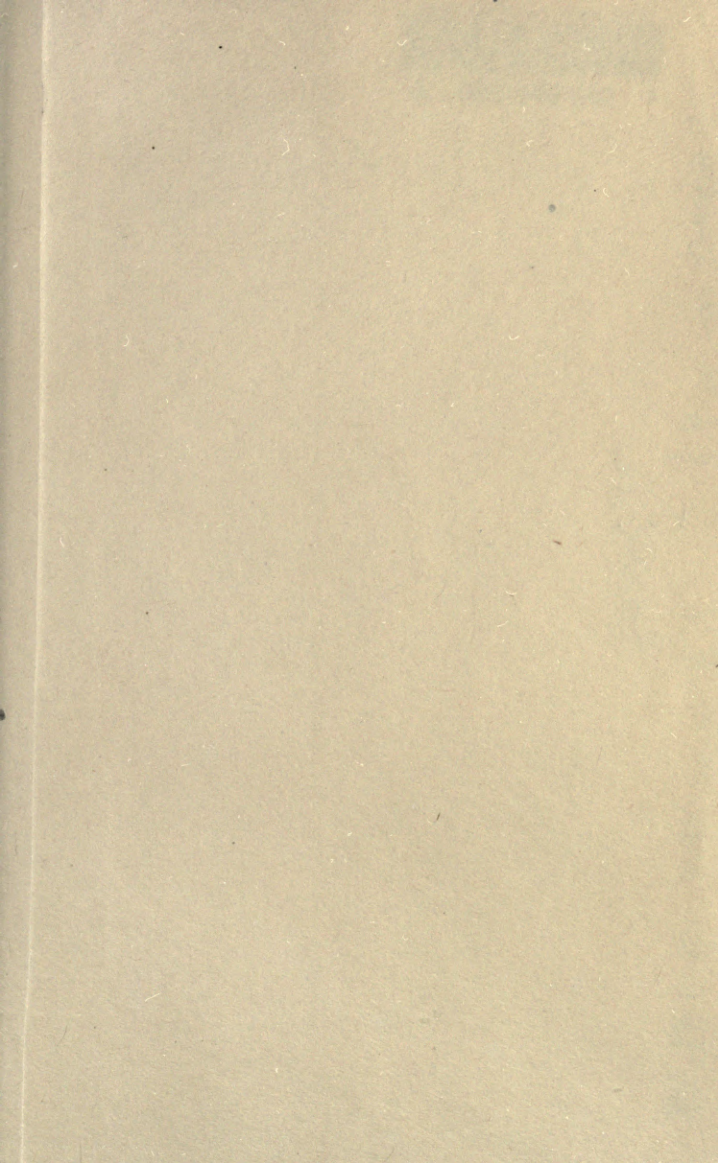
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